

## The Seminar for Historical Administration Turns 40

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**I**n the historical agency field, there are few professional development opportunities as reputable or rewarding as the Seminar for Historical Administration. The three-week course is offered to individuals currently employed as administrators, or preparing for such a position, in historical organizations, museums, historic sites, or other preservation agencies. The program goal is to develop and strengthen leadership skills through exposure to recent trends in the profession.

### *Historical Perspective*

The field of historical administration was just emerging when Dr. Edward Alexander, then Vice President and Director of Interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg created the Seminar in 1958. The course was initially aligned with academia, with the intent of training a new breed of professionals who would become leaders in the field. Doctoral students in American Studies were recruited from prestigious universities to learn about practicing history outside the walls of academia. The Seminar for Historical Administration (SHA) was established with institutional backing from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, American Association for State and Local History, American Association of Museums, and the National Park Service together with support from prestigious academic institutions.

During the late 1960s, the student profile began to shift from individuals with strong academic backgrounds to those with localized and diverse experiences. Curriculum adjustments were as much a sign of changing times as the mix of participants. When the SHA was initiated in the late '50s—historic interpretation was the focus of the course. As the profession evolved and social trends emerged, Seminar sponsors continually worked to keep the course vital and relevant.

Traditionally, the Seminar covered four categories of study: Background, Administration, Research, and Interpretation. Background included introductions about the services provided by each sponsoring institution, information about preservation, and a historical overview of the profession. Administration covered topics such as fund-raising, ethics, and relations between trustees, directors, staff, donors, constituents and community. Research focused on studies in preservation, architecture, archeology, conservation and

collections. Interpretation dealt with exhibits, education, visitor services, publications, and outreach. The four components of the curriculum continue to set the tone for the Seminar although the percentage devoted to each has been modified over the years.

By 1976, the topic of administration took the lead in 58% of the curriculum sessions, growing to 70% by 1983. The need to emphasize administration occurred in response to a growing demand for more effective administration in non-profit historic agencies. What had begun as a training opportunity to recruit professionals, evolved into a program anxious to meet the demands of the field.

The Seminar is no longer an overview or introduction to historical administration. Instead, the course provides specific guidelines and strategies that contribute to professional development in the field.

### *SHA Today*

The established setting for the seminar is historic Colonial Williamsburg where Foundation staff extends resources and hospitality to Seminar participants over a three-week period. Participants receive a President's pass, entitling them to explore Colonial Williamsburg at their leisure, participate in activities, take advantage of local expertise for noon time meetings, behind the scene tours, or learning about the development of interpretive programming. Immersion in an 18th century landscape during autumn only adds to the other privileges the Seminar affords.

Course content offers a comprehensive view of the management and leadership skills needed to successfully operate in today's non-profit community. During the seminar, approximately 45 faculty present 28 sessions on a variety of topics including historic preservation, defining community, education, interpretation, heritage tourism, human resources, legal issues, ethics, fund-raising, financial management, and team building. While each session may not apply directly to your present position, chances are you will deal with all of the topics at some point in your career. Each participant leaves the Seminar with an enormous quantity of insight and professional resources.

A recurring message throughout the course was about surviving as leaders in non-profit cultural institutions during an era of high competition for local, state, and federal funds. With crime, welfare, and education dominating the minds of

politicians and constituents, it is vital for our institutions to be relevant to the communities we serve. When we engage the public by effectively using resources to educate and contribute to a better understanding of history and material culture, we will have succeeded in fulfilling our mission.

The Seminar for Historical Administration is the longest running and undoubtedly the best professional training course in historical administration available in the country. The course inspires change and leaves a lasting impact on all those who attend. Graduating from SHA is a great honor as well as an achievement that endorses contributions to the profession through excellence and leadership.

This year marks the Seminar's 40th anniversary, and festivities are planned for a reunion at Colonial Williamsburg on November 21, 1998. Alumni from throughout the United States and

Canada will be convening to share their commitment to SHA and the profession. Participate in the 1998 Seminar and come join us!

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For more information on the October 31-November 21, 1998, seminar, contact Peggy McDonald Howells at 757-220-7211. The Seminar is co-sponsored by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the American Association for State and Local History, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the American Association of Museums.

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Karen Stevens

## Building Project Records at Independence

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**H**ow can parks fulfill the NPS mandate to document, preserve, and protect building project records?

Parks engage in maintenance, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration activities during the normal course of managing park resources. Simple or complex, large or small, each project generates its own set of documentation with permanent value that requires curation by park personnel in accordance with NPS *Museum Handbook*, Part I and Part II, Appendix D (1996).

Parks may find some guidance in Special Directive 94-6, "Ensuring that Projects Generating Museum Collections Fund Cataloging and Basic Preservation." Formulated to address museum collections not covered by Special Directive 87-3, "Conservation of Archeological Resources" and Special Directive 91-4, "Ensuring that Natural Resource Projects Fund the Curation of Collections," the guidelines in 94-6 apply to other cultural resource projects such as building projects. The cultural resource management records produced by construction projects include drawings, reports, photographs, and correspondence in a variety of audio-visual, electronic and textual formats.

Independence National Historical Park is engaged in a multi-phased, multi-year project for the rehabilitation of park utilities and structures,

which will double the quantity of building project records archived since the establishment of the park. The volume, size and format of documentation generated by the program will strain the park's ability to pay the cost associated with storage, processing and cataloging.

Phase I of the Utility Improvement Project (UIP), is expected to span several years, and involves the replacement of utility systems in five structures on Independence Square—Independence Hall, Congress Hall, Old City Hall and the East and West Wings of Independence Hall. In addition, rehabilitation of the HVAC systems of many other park structures is expected to continue into the next decade.

In addition to rehabilitating the utility systems of park structures, the program will also address hazardous materials abatement, such as asbestos and lead paint. The park will take the opportunity to address accessibility issues, as required by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. And finally, as funding permits, the park hopes to develop and install new exhibits in several historic structures.

Independence NHP is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, First and Second Banks have been designated National Historic Landmarks and Independence Hall and Independence Square have been designated a World Heritage Site. The park is significant, not